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Subject: The Ground of Salvation.

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OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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THE GROUND OF SALVATION.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,—that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."—Eph. II., 4-8.

We have here an exposition (if it is to be found anywhere in the Bible) of the ground of salvation. There is no possibility, it seems to me, of framing language broader and more explicit than that which here declares that man's salvation does not stand in himself, in his character, in his nature, in his desire, and, by implication, in his skill, nor in his power; but that it stands in the infinite goodness and generosity of God—that God saves men on account of what is in *Him*, and not on account of what is in them.

"For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

A gift is some object of value transferred from one to another, as a sign and token of good will or friendship. A simple gift is neither earned nor deserved. It carries with it no idea of commerce, and no idea of equity. It carries exclusively the idea of friendship, of kindness. But sometimes a gift may be bestowed upon persons who are in great need of it, and who even solicit it on account of their need. Then it is called a *benefaction*, or, more commonly, a *charity*. And if it be something given to earnest and importunate solicitation, it is called a *dole*. But where a gift is presented to one not altogether as an act of friendship nor as a charity; where it is presented to one who by his special character and conduct has no right to expect it; who has in some sense fortified himself against the access of such a gift, then it is called a *grace*, in the language of the New Testament. A great kindness, then, shown to an undeserving person, is a grace; that is, it is a gift not deserved by any conditions which exist between the giver and the receiver of friendship, and so is a gift not to be expected.

Now, the gift of eternal life, conferred through the Lord Jesus Christ upon men, is said to be both of these ; namely, a gift and a grace. And there is something affecting, when it has once been called a grace, that it should also be called a gift. For as *grace* implies ill-desert, so when a great favor is conferred, and it is called a *gift*, the implication is, that the ill-desert is forgotten, and that the parties are treated as though they were on foundations of common friendship, unsullied and unforfeited. And in order to make this stronger, the apostle calls it a *free gift*. A gift is free anyhow ; but here is brought to it that central conception of freeness which distinguishes it from a grace. There is supplied that peculiar grace of God which is great kindness shown to sinful men, who are undeserving of any such gift, but upon whom God, in his generosity, is disposed to look, not as culprits and criminals afar off but as brought near to him, as friends through the Lord Jesus Christ. And the declaration of the apostle which we have selected, is, that spiritual life, pardon and salvation, here and hereafter, are gifts of God, or graces conferred. That is to say, that a man is pardoned and saved, not on account of his earning pardon and salvation, not on account of what there is in him, not on account of any equivalent to that favor which is rendered to him, but because there is that in the nature of God which goes out to man's salvation, and which represents a quality, a character, a nature in God, rather than any affection or condition in the persons who are the recipients.

The reason, then, of pardon and life, lies in the fullness of the love and generosity which inhere in the original and everlasting nature of God. It is a nature which throbs for outburst ; which seeks out, in creating, and through creation, new and infinite channels by which may flow down to an infinity of creatures the greatness of the benefaction of the all-loving soul of God. And God's saving mercy is free to every intelligent creature that is on the globe, or that shall be on the globe, as an absolutely free gift.

But our profit in this amnesty or gift must come as all benefit of the soul comes ; that is, by our accepting it. The proffer does not bring profit—the *realization* does. Thus, we take physical things by our physical organs. If they are presented to us, we possess them only when we have taken them in the way in which physical things, material things can be taken. When intellectual things are presented to us (ideas, for instance, and new truths, or inflections of old ones), they are of no validity, and of no use, and of no significance to us as long as our intellect, being dead, does not rise up to receive them. A man presented with the most astonishing discoveries written out in a book which he cannot read, has in some sense a gift of knowledge presented to him ; but it is of no use to him, simply because his in-

telleet cannot receive it under such conditions. If the gift is material, you must accept it as material gifts are accepted. If the gift be intellectual, it must be conferred and received as intellectual gifts are conferred and received. If the gift be emotive, then it must appeal to the sensibility of reciprocal emotion; as, if one confers confidence or affection or friendship, that is received only when a corresponding warmth of affection rises up to take it and to realize it. And the generosity, the life, the goodness, the loving-kindness, the long-suffering of God—these can be received by us only through some corresponding spiritual sensibility. And although they are ours in one sense, in another sense they never avail for us until in some manner we take them home to ourselves. This is what is meant by *receiving the free grace of God by faith*. It is the nature of God looking out upon men, sinful and degraded, to love them—as I shall have occasion to show before I am done. To love them without forfeit, and without waiting for their reformation; to love them while yet they are sinners and sinning—that is the nature of God. Yet the proclamation of that nature which the great heart of God beams and pours out; the proclamation of benefaction, pardon, restoration, inspiration, divinity, for every living soul, the proclamation of the dying of the Saviour to give liberty to mankind—if it falls on men as sunshine on stone, it does no good. For this great knowledge, this great proclamation of divine, loving amnesty, must be received by some feeling that corresponds to itself before it takes hold of men with any benefit.

A worm, to-day—if there be worms in December unburied—lives in a world just as large and just as rich as you and I do; but how much of this world can a worm appropriate? And what is all the world to it except just that little modicum which it can itself appropriate? The worm has just as much of the world as a worm can use—not a bit more. All the rest to it is surplusage.

The sparrow that hunts the worm has a great deal larger world; but then it is a sparrow-world, after all; and the world of the sparrow is measured by the power of the sparrow to appropriate. The sparrow has risen above the worm, a great way in organization, and a great many degrees above the worm-form. But, after all, it is simply a creature of that world which it can appropriate.

The dog is far higher than the bird. And in the dog you begin to see the germs of rational intelligence, and the germs of affection and of disposition. The dog is, as it were, the prophecy of the man. And yet, large as he is, advanced as he is, he owns only just so much world as a dog can appropriate. What to the dog is architecture, in respect to its element of beauty? Nothing. He has no eye for beauty. What to him are the sciences? Nothing. What is knowledge to him?

Nothing. It does not exist to him. It is outside of his possible apprehension. Only so much of this world exists to that dog as is able to get into him—into his apprehension and receptivity.

When you go to an intelligent barbarian, you have gone a great deal higher than the dog. And yet, the barbarian has in this world only just so much as he can appropriate. Yet there is an immense reach of reality that he never appreciates, and never comes into sympathy with, and derives no benefit from.

And from the barbarian man, step by step, through all civilizing influences, we come at last to the rational, the intelligent, the cultivated and spiritualized man.

And now, how much larger the world is to him! Yet all that part of the great outlying world that he has no affinity for, all that part of it for which he has no experience, no susceptibility, and which does not interpret itself to him on any chord, nor along any avenue of intelligence in him—all that part of the world is to him as if it were not. And if there be outside of the race of man angelic races; and if, high above all these, God over all, blessed forever, has filled the conception of perfectness, of beauty, of gracefulness, of gentleness, of sweetness, of ineffable love, of bounty, and of beneficence transcending all conceptions formed in our lower reaches of life; if there be such a God as this in the heavens, they only can have the benefit of that revelation of God who have some capacity to reciprocate it, to take hold of it, to see it, to feel it. But to all those who have no such capacity he is as if he were not. Therefore it is said that while men are saved by God's unconditional goodness, because it is the nature of God to love men, and to purify them, and to save them, they are not saved, after all, unless the knowledge, the proffer, coming to them, is accepted by something in them which corresponds to the divine nature. It is all as nothing to men who have no eyes to see it, no heart to experience it, and no will to accept it. We are saved by the grace or gift of God, and not of ourselves. We are saved by the faith of this grace or gift of God, by believing it, and accepting it. In other words, that is the way in which it works.

This, then, is the philosophy of faith, or receptive belief. And the reason why God's love does not help multitudes of men to whom it is preached, is, that they reciprocate nothing to it.

I remark, then, in the first place, in view of this brief statement, that this is the true and only method in which the doctrine of salvation should be presented to men. This is the ground and reason of salvation, namely, God's nature. It is the presentation of a personal God, full of love and full of mercy, rescuing from sin and degradation every soul that will receive his love. This is the true atonement. God is

the atonement. What he has done shows atoning mercy; but the essence and centre of atonement lies in God himself, and not in any exhibitory action of it. It is the eternal and the everlasting nature of love to heal sin, to forgive sin, to purify men from their lower state, and bring them up out of the bondage of the flesh, and into the glorious light and liberty of the sons of God. Now, if one wants to know why a man is saved, by the grace of God he is saved. What does *the grace of God* mean? It means God's loving power. How comes God by this love? Ask him. Ask eternity. It is the nature of God.

A presentation to mankind of the theory of atonement from a lower plane than this, as has been so prevalent, and is to this day so prevalent, is pernicious. Not that there is not, or may not be, a theory of atonement; but an explanation of the "plan of salvation" as it has been drawn out in theology, after the analogy, mostly, of human civil governments, tends to destroy the essential part of the personality of God in the quickening and saving work of salvation. God's mercy through Jesus Christ is to be presented, evermore, simply as the sovereign, benignant, blessed act of a divine Person. We are not, in presenting this to men, to go back and ask the question, "Why did he?" or "How did he?" We are to stand simply in this great luminous fact, that it is the nature of God to love; and out of this great central nature God does present salvation to every man. Every man that will receive it will have the benefit of it. Those that do not accept it will go on as if it were not true, and to them it will not be true. That is the law of the universe. There is sun-light enough for all flowers that want it; but if a flower is under a rock the sun-light does not help it. Or, if you can imagine such a thing as a flower standing where the sun might pour down upon it, and hiding itself away out of the sun's rays; if you can imagine it as resisting the shining of the sun so that his light cannot reach it, the sun would be of no advantage to it. Summer only helps things that take summer into them.

We are not, then, to preach the *plan of salvation*, but we are to preach *God*, to men. We are not to preach the *atonement*; we are to preach *Christ*. We are not to preach the philosophy of redemption; we are to preach *the blessedness of God's heart and soul*. The moment that you undertake to preach that which is strictly philosophical in this matter, that very moment you preach man's theorizing as a substitute for the revelation of God himself.

But it will be asked, "Do not the Scriptures teach that the suffering and death of Christ were the ground and reason of this divine mercy?" I reply, No, not in the sense in which men think they do.

But, not to dwell upon that, the Scriptures do teach, I think, that

the sinless obedience, the expiatory suffering and the death of Christ, had some relation, in the invisible realm of divine government, to the world's salvation. I know that a great many dispute that; but I do not see my way clear to set it aside. After careful and long reading of Scripture, I cannot but believe that the Apostles taught, and meant men to believe, that the suffering of Christ had an expiatory virtue in it; that the suffering and death of Christ did do more than constitute a manifestation; that they did have a virtue that in some way changed things in the great world behind and out of sight. I cannot fairly construe the language of the New Testament other than so.

But it stops right there, without going one single step further. It merely recognizes, without explanation, without solution, the fact that the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus prepared a way for the mercy of God to reach mankind. It left that fact without a syllable of explanation as to the *how* or *why*.

And so I am accustomed to say that I believe the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ did have an influence, out of my knowledge, and out of the world's knowledge, which will be revealed hereafter; that in some way they took hold of the processes of things in the universe; and that all that part of Christ's suffering which is explained to us, iterated and reiterated as a motive power, all that part of it which is addressed to our conscience and our intelligence and our susceptibility, is this: that the influence of it was to make manifest that which inhered in the nature of God; and that the sufferings of Christ, so far as we are concerned,—so far as we are to search them out, and work them out,—have not so much to do with the economy of God's moral government, as with the influence which is to be exerted among men. And obedience, and suffering willingly borne, and death triumphantly met—all these are modes by which we measure what is the fullness of love, the strength of love, the depth of love, and the power of love. Our Lord declared:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

And it is said in the passage which I have read in your hearing this morning:

"Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners [bad as we could be: I do not mean sinning as badly as we could, but being out of friendship and out of sympathy, and so being in the remotest sphere possible from the expectation of any such goodness]—God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

There was the commendation of love. It was an emotion that would bear suffering. It was an emotion that would bear pangs unutterable. It was an emotion that could go through a long experi-

ence of humiliation, and death itself—and under circumstances that no human intelligence can ever interpret. For the experience of one Man no man can interpret. The experience of so great a nature as that of Christ, going through that which he went through, no man can conceive of. That it was vast, that it was voluminous, Gethsemane bears witness. Many a drooping hour when his soul was troubled well-nigh unto death bears witness to its greatness. It was very different and far beyond all common human experience. And all of it,—what he thought, and felt, and suffered, and forbore, and did,—we are told by the Apostle are commendations of the love of God. They are interpretations of it; they are the measures of it. And so far as we are concerned, all that we need to know of the philosophy of the sufferings of Christ, is this: that they measure to us the greatness of his mercy and the greatness of God's love; that they interpret to us the effulgence and the fullness of that divine generosity and of that divine kindness in which is the hope of the world and the salvation of every man that is saved.

When, then, we are to preach the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not for us to preach so much an explanation of how Christ was enabled to be “just, and yet the Justifier.” It may be true that there was a process which he went through in order to be just and yet the Justifier; but the philosophy of that process is never explained. It may be implied; it is implied: but all the explanation there is of it is but a hint. But, on the other hand, that which the Scripture does deal in, is that Christ is prepared to save; and that, so far as we are concerned, the ground and reason of mercy and salvation is love in Christ to us. The declaration is not, “Because I have gone through such, and such, and such steps I am now qualified to offer you salvation.” It is, “Salvation is possible to the worst sinners, because God loves so. And that he does love so is made manifest by what He has suffered to show it.” The suffering and the experience of Christ are always arguments interpreting the greatness of the love of God in Christ Jesus, and not philosophical statements for the sake of establishing or illustrating some mysterious plan which lies back unexplained.

If, then, a man knows that the nature of God, as made manifest through the Lord Jesus Christ, and in him, is such that it is his desire, and has been from eternity, and will be to eternity, to raise the weak, to lift up the fallen, to forgive the sinful, to build up those that are cast down, to fill meager and fainting souls with strength and sustenance and power, and to carry them on to glory, and that He does this for just the same reason that a mother does things for her child—not because the public sentiment makes her; not because the law

makes her; not because the child is going to pay her back; but out of the fountain of motherhood; out of that instinct and impulsion of love in her own bosom which makes her succor the poor and needy, the ground and reason of safety for the child being found in her *love*—if a man knows this, he knows all that the Scriptures undertake to teach him on this subject, and he does not need to search for any further explanation of it. Says God, “In my ineffable and everlasting love is the salvation of the world; and I pardon, I spare, I pity, I deliver, and I will ransom with an everlasting salvation every one that believes in me, because I am so loving and so generous. It is my nature to love. I am Father, and I will brood the world as fatherhood and motherhood brood the cradle.” That is the divinity and the power of the universe. That is the infinite power of love. That is the truth of the atonement. That is the glory of the atonement, in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. And they are founded (they were illustrated in Jerusalem, but never founded there) they are founded in the eternity of God—in that drift and current, moving mighty as the ages, from eternity to eternity. And our salvation stands, not in any plan, or theory, or explanation, or arrangement, but in the force of the whole total nature of God, as a Being of infinite love, and therefore of infinite compassion and infinite succor.

And that is the thing to be preached. That is the thing which breaks down the heart. That is the thing which makes men bow down their heads, and say, “If this be God, let me worship.” That is the thing which gives hope and courage to mankind.

If one be sick, and you present him medicine, knowing his sickness perfectly well, and saying to him, “This will certainly alleviate your pain, and restore you,” he takes the medicine. How? By faith in your statement, simply. And he is relieved by it. But suppose you thought it necessary to say to him, “This medicine was gathered, some of it in Africa, and some of it in South America; and it was gathered at such and such seasons of the year. The juices of the plant were extracted and prepared. And then by commerce they were brought hither. And now these various elements have been brought together and triturated in such and such proportions. And when taken, one part goes to the secretions, and another part goes to the liver, and another part goes to the nerves. And so, this being the way in which the medicine was obtained, in which it was made, and in which it operates, if you take it you will get well.” If you were trying to make a doctor, I do not dispute that this might be a wise method, and that it might be advisable to undertake to show him whence medicine comes, and how it operates, in order to direct him in the prescription of medicine; but if you were prescribing for a

patient that was sick, and that was writhing in the agonies of present pain, you would not think of entering into a botanical explanation as to the origin of the medicine, nor as to the philosophy of its operation.

Now, I do not say but there may be reasons why, in the chair of theology, when you are discussing the abstract nature of all governments, and the abstract nature of all things derived from one source or another, it may be proper and necessary to discuss this matter of God's moral government. There is no question that may not be raised under such circumstances. There is no question that may not be in order in the philosopher's or the professor's chair. But when the Gospel is being preached, I protest against your presenting your *philosophy* of God's medicine for the soul's want, before prescribing the *medicine* for that want. First bring God's love to the soul that is sick, and let the heart take it; and then the man is healed by it whether he knows where it came from, how it is prepared, and why it was presented to him, or not.

Food for the starving does not require that the starving shall understand the origin of the food, or the operation of it. Raiment for the cold does not require that they for whom it is provided shall know whence it comes. A house of refuge being opened to those who are hard pressed, it is not needful, before they come in to enjoy its comforts, that they should know just when it was built, and just how it was built, and just how it was paid for, and just how it was arranged within. A knowledge of the history and economy of that house is not necessary before one takes the mercy which it offers.

A life-boat puts out to a foundering ship. Is it needful before one leaps from the sinking vessel into the frail life-boat, that every single thing about it shall be explained to him? Must he wait and be informed who made it, and of what materials it is constructed? Men never act in that way on subjects of that kind. It is only in matters of theology that they act so strangely. In all the great welfares of life, men do not undertake to teach the philosophy of things before the benefit of those things can be availed of; and they ought not to do it in matters so important and vital as the question of their soul's salvation. That which is essential is this *reciprocal love*. God so loved the world that he gave his Son to die for it; and He died for it while yet it was at enmity to him. And whoever believes that this dying of the Lord Jesus Christ is the evidence and interpretation of God's pardoning love; whoever will accept that truth, and believe it; whoever feels constantly the gushing in his soul of that love, and the certainty of it, is saved by the *ingress through grace*, as it is called, of this truth into his nature.

That which has power with men, then, I think to be, not that which presents to them the history, if I may so say, of moral mechanism in the universe; but that which presents to them a personal God, clothed with all the sympathies, and all the yearnings, and all the desires that characterize a father. That certainly is the way in which the apostles preached Christ everywhere; and that is the way which subsequent experience proves to be the most beneficial preaching of Christ. That which men most need to have preached, is not a plan of salvation, but Christ. Preaching God, and not the philosophy of God's moral government is what is needed.

I remark, in the second place, that Paul does discuss the plan of salvation; but how? And to whom? Why, to the Jews. We find, for instance, in the apostles' writings—principally in Paul's—the declaration that Christ is the end of the law, and that Christ made a satisfaction for the law, and that he fulfilled the law, and made it honorable. And so men have inferred that the atonement of Christ was necessary in order that God should first satisfy the claims of justice and the claims of law throughout the universe; and that when they had been satisfied (some said in one way, and some in another; for there have been infinite diversities of theories in respect to this) then he could consistently with justice offer salvation to all that would comply with the terms. Now this is, in my humble judgment, surplusage. The whole question that Paul argued with the Jews was just as simple as A, B, C. Christ came to the Jews, himself a Jew, and a follower of the Jewish Law, declaring that that law should never pass away.

“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.”

That is its substantial basis. And when the apostles began to teach Christ, men said, “Our fathers have been chastised enough for abandoning the law of Moses. This is God's law, made known to us, and confirmed through ages by proofs immutable; and we are not going into a new religion. We are not going to throw aside the Mosaic law and take the religion of Jesus Christ.” And what was the answer of the apostle? It was this: “My dear brethren, you do not abandon Moses, and you do not abandon the law of God, when you accept the Lord Jesus Christ; for Jesus Christ himself is the law. The law means him. It was the foreshadowing of him. And in taking that which is the substance instead of the shadow, you fulfill the law better than if you took the law, and left the personal Christ out. You do not understand that in your history the whole economy of Moses was a schoolmaster to bring you to Christ; and that when Christ comes, and you take him, instead of taking something antagonistic to your law, you take that self-same thing. You keep it through a person in a man-

ner that you could not until Christ came. And therefore you do not give up the law. Christ makes the law more honorable, larger, nobler, wider, more spiritual.

Now, this was a historical argument to the Jew which had great meaning and which extricated him from embarrassment; for, throughout, "the law" means the law of God as taught by Moses, the Jewish law, the only law the Jews knew or cared anything about. But, when a modern teacher goes before a modern audience that has no such historical snare or besetment, that has never been educated in the Jewish law, and undertakes to argue that God himself must satisfy the great *moral* law, in the sense in which the Jews argued it, he has violated historical propriety; he has gone aside from scriptural example; he has introduced an official, and I think a merely scholastic issue that does not belong to the Bible, and only perplexes man's understanding. Therefore, when you read in the New Testament that the law had to be thought of and to be observed, do not think that it is meant that God had, before he could offer pardon to the world, to sit down and say to himself, "How shall I pardon the world that lies in wickedness? If I do, all my intelligent creatures in heaven will get up and say, 'Where is your justice?' Now, I must take care of the angels, and the universe first; and when I have taken care of these, I can forgive sinners." This is the modern fictitious and false notion.

Over against it, I present the sublime defense made by God himself, when, in answer to the same kind of reasoning on the part of the Jews, who thought that he could not save any but Jews, he said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." It is God's declaration of independence to act according to the impulse of his own glorious personality. "I am not tied up by my promises to Abraham; I am not tied up by any federation with the Jews," said God: "I have liberty of infinite love, and of individual justice; and there is nothing that holds me. There is no system, no government, no anything that prevents my letting flash and flame out my own personal power of nature."

And that which was true in answering the Jewish prejudices and national conceit, is still more eminently true in answering the scholastic conceit of the philosophy of atonement. God saves men because he loves to save them. His mercy saves every man who knows enough to open his heart and say, "I will take it, and believe in it, and rejoice in it."

I see people going by my house on whom the roaring wind and the pelting rain are beating; and I open my door and say to a poor, slenderly clad, feeble woman, without umbrella, without cloak, without gloves, "My dear madam, come up hither. Come in." She rushes

up the stoop, glad of a shelter from the biting rain and hail; and I close the door on her and bring her to the fire. Why do I do it? Because I am a humane man. It is just that, and nothing else. Who is she? Let us not ask. All we want to know is that she is miserable. Why do I show her mercy? Because she is virtuous? She is not. Her hand knows theft; her heart knows guile; but she is miserable, and she suffers. And when I know all that, do I send her away from my fire? No. I feed her. I clothe her. And if she goes out from my house, she goes out with my benefaction. And after she is gone, I console myself with the hope that my kindness to her will lead her to better ways. Why did I do it? Not in obedience to any law. There is no great problem of metaphysics in it. It is just this: That I love to do such things to a fellow creature. And is not the philosophy of atonement this: that God loves to heal sinning creatures? And he loves to do it because he is God. That is the reason for sinning men to lay hold of. You do not want to go any further than that. And all further explanations are overlaid with the miserable fictitious systems of man's justice which give us all our analogies of the requisitions of God's justice. And all our arguments on the theory of atonement, as based upon the necessities of moral law and government, are derived from civil jurisprudence. Civil jurisprudence is the best form of law that men can make; and yet, it is a very rickety affair. There is nothing in the world that, beginning on right, sound principle, runs, at every single step, into more blunders and inconsistencies. There are not more meshes in a net than there are in the administration of human justice. It is what society cannot get along without; but it is not a perfect system in theory, and still less in practice. And are you to derive your analogies from that which is the mere creature of weakness and necessity? And are you to lay those analogies upon the infinite perfection of the eternal God, and say, "Because a judge on the earth has to act so and so, Jehovah has to act so and so?"

That explanation of the law, then, which had a historical meaning to the Jew, and which served to extricate him from embarrassments, when you undertake to apply it to us, commuting the law from the old historical, ceremonial law into the abstract or modern law of justice, is as a piece of mechanism between the soul and a personal God.

A plan of Salvation there may be; but that is not what we are sent to preach. A theory of atonement there may be; but that theory we are not sent to preach. We were not told to go down and explain to men how God might be just, and the Justifier; but simply that he *is* just when he justifies and clears, and when he condemns as well. The accomplished fact, and the sublimest and supremest fact that it is

possible for men to understand, is the personality of the everliving and everlasting God, the Source of life; the Source of healing; the Source of inspiration; the Source of growth; the Architect of ages; the Up-builder; the Nurse; the Father; the Mother; the Friend; the First And the Last; the Beginning and the Ending; the Author and the Finisher. That is what He is to every needy soul, to every hungry soul, to every wretched soul. God is enough, in the infinite fullness of his nature and love and sympathy, for every living creature on the boundless globe, and through the epochs of time. And that great fact of divine love in personality—let it not be degenerated into a web of metaphysics! Let it not carnalize itself into the miserable analogies of a botched human justice! Let it stand and glow in the pure sympathy and glorious personality of a central God; Father, Son and Holy Ghost, all-loving, all-drawing, all-inspiring and lifting up men into their ultimate and rejoicing condition in heaven. *There is atonement for you!*

Every end of religion requires that man should be brought face to face and heart to heart with a loving God. For it is this divine heart-power that is our whole hope.

You remember that very affecting story that lies unused so often in the Old Testament, where the Prophet Elisha was at night called in to see the widow's child. The child was dead. It was the only light in the house; and that light went out. And so the house was dark. And you remember how he stretched himself on that child, and put his face on the little child's face, and put his hands on the little child's hands, and his body, part by part, over the child's body; and how the little child sneezed, and his life began to come back? Beautiful it is in the old prophet's story. Infinitely more beautiful, to me, is the thought that the great God lays his great heart on my heart, and on your heart, and on all hearts. And it is this pressure of the heart of God that wakes in my life correspondency, sympathy, hope, love, a new life.

And it is that which men want. It is power to realize God, and to know how beautiful he is, and how generous he is, and how long-suffering he is, and how abundant he is in mercy and kindness—though he will not clear the guilty finally. It is the knowledge of this that breaks down the flinty hearts of men. And it is the thing for you to preach and talk, as it is the thing, also, for you to rejoice in, in your own personal lives—namely, the glorious fullness of Jesus Christ, who is the manifestation of God, as pitying, sparing, forbearing, rebuilding, converting, sanctifying, and finally saving.

So, then, when at last we come home to glory—then, not as a doctrine, but as an experience, every one of us will say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Then we will say, "Not by works of right-

eousness which I have done, but by the love of God, I have been saved."

Let me read now again, in your hearing, that whole connection in the 5th of Romans,—for it is one of the strongest passages of Scripture, and it will throw light on still another point:

"When we were yet without strength, in due time [or in the fullness of time] Christ died for the ungodly."

That which God's love is willing to suffer death for, is ungodly men.

"Nor scarcely for a righteous man will one die [among men]; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die."

A merely just man does not excite much sympathy. A benevolent man excites a good deal of sympathy; and some might die for a benevolent man though they would not, for a just man.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

O sinner! he loved you so that while you were yet sinners he died for you; he loves you so that while you are yet sinning, your sinful heart does not obliterate the glory of God's love toward you.

"Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

That is to say, the life of Christ is a great deal more efficacious, is a great deal more powerful in the general salvation of this world, than his death was, powerful and efficacious as that was. And it seems to me that here is all the philosophy that we want, and all the explanation that we need. It seems to me that here is the sum and substance of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ: Man is sinful, and utterly unable to build himself up; and God, in the spirit of infinite love and generosity, shining new life and new light, pouring abroad effulgent beams upon the hearts of men, is willing to rescue them, and willing to build them up. And what time any heart or soul looks up, beholds, recognizes, receives; what time any one feels "God loves me with an infinite loving, and is my Father for my soul's good," it is because the corresponding principle of love has sprung into being in that soul. And the moment that feeling of love begins to work in you, you are a new creature; you are passed from death to life. And from that time onward, the mighty nature and power of the universe, as disclosed in the love of God in Christ Jesus, that wonderful secret influence, will be working in you toward sanctification; and finally you shall stand and see him face to face, when the work is completed in you, and you shall be like him.

Thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift of his Son Jesus Christ!

And to every poor, needy, wretched, sinful, conscience-smitten, and consciously weak creature in this congregation, I bring no elaborate system, I bring no mysticism, I bring no philosophical curiosity, I bring no need of vast knowledge in respect to moral government and to the plan of salvation; but I bring to you a truth which is just as simple as the truth of a mother overhanging her cradle. I bring to you the nature of God as shown in Jesus Christ—a curative nature of love, recreating. And I say that this God is revealed for you. If you need help, here it is, If you need forgiveness, here it is waiting for you. If you need inspiration, here it is. It is not formed into a system; it is not wrought out by any principle; it is this: *God, in Christ Jesus, loves, spares, pardons, and will save.*

Now, I beseech of you, if your thoughts turn toward this subject this morning, in its simple disclosure; if there is in your bosoms a yearning for a higher life, a longing for a better experience, turn away from all human knowledge. Learn in prayer. With the Word of God go to your closet, and ask that blessing. Seek that knowledge by faith, and you shall not seek in vain. It is the way in which you have been invited. It is the way in which thousands have gone. And to-day there are in heaven more than numbers can count, who, in this simple way, believe that God loves them, and has pardoned them, and will love them unto perfection, and who embrace Him in a spirit of corresponding love. There are multitudes without number in heaven who triumph over the victory of redeeming grace. May more be added to this number—more out of this congregation; more out of our families! And, Christian brethren, may we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, unto the end. *Amen.*

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice in thee, thou ever-loving and blessed God. We rejoice in the greatness of thy love, and in the power which it hath, and shall have. We rejoice to believe that it shall not always be so,—that by those in heaven thou art known and adored, though by a few only, upon earth; but that the knowledge of the Lord shall yet cover the earth, and that thy will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. Toward that consummation, we rejoice to believe, through darkness, through light, through storm, through calm, things are tending, and love shall yet be victorious over selfishness and animalism; and all things shall praise thee, and rejoice in thee. We desire, O Lord, to quicken our faith, and to take comfort in the midst of discouragements by the hope of victory. We desire to rejoice in the day of small things, when wicked men are strong and the righteous are feeble. We desire to take shelter in the prophecy and prediction of better things to come. We rejoice that the conflict, a part of which we wage, is not endless. We rejoice that sighings and groanings with travailling in pain until now which have belonged to the whole earth shall not be perpetuated forever. There shall be an end; there shall be illustrious victory; there shall be joy

and peace abiding undisturbed forever; and they shall be crowned with love. And all that are thine own, purified from every stain and from every spot, shall rejoice together, being as the sons of God.

Now, Lord, we beseech of thee that we may enter into the greatness of thy thought, and into the zeal with which thou art pushing the world forward towards the day of final consummation. May we, in our own hearts, be cleansed from all unrighteousness, and become as little children. And with the simplicity of faith and love may we embrace Jesus, our Saviour, and live in him, and abide in the power of his resurrection. May we be raised from all death and from all sin into newness of life. We pray that we may be quickened by the divine Spirit. We know how quickly drops our nature back towards earth again. We know that but for the shining of the light of thy Spirit all our light would turn to darkness; and that but for the attraction of the divine love, we should fall back again to dust. And we pray for this quickening influence of thy Spirit, and for this life of God shed abroad in our hearts. We pray that sin may not have dominion over us, nor within us; that we may be able to overcome temptations and resist easily besetting sins; that we may be able to live by faith, and have the victory of faith. If there are those who are storm-bested, those who are driven for refuge and know not whither to flee, O Lord, let them to-day see the heart of God, the refuge of the sorrowful. Let them, to-day, behold the mercy that is in Jesus Christ, the help of every needy one. Let them behold the sweet influence of the Spirit of God that brings us consolation through all the sorrows of life. We pray for all that are tempted more than they are able to bear; and for all that to-day look back upon their evil ways to repent of them, and turn from them that they may live. Grant them thy quickening influence and great encouragement. Meet them with benedictions. And grant to them that forgiveness which they supplicate.

Bless those that pray for others—parents for children; friends for friends; companions for companions; teachers for their pupils; and all that pray for those that are separated from them and are afar off from them. We pray that this may be a golden hour of their experience. And bless the absent ones. Remember those that go down upon the great waters. Remember those that are separated by the seas from those that love them. Remember those that are strangers in foreign lands. Remember those that are in the wilderness where no man dwelleth. Remember all, this day, with divine blessing, whom our hearts remember.

And we pray, O Lord, that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who, to-day, shall make known the Gospel of Christ, the unsearchable riches of divine love. And wherever they are, may their hands be strengthened and their hearts be encouraged; and may they preach faithfully the word in season and out of season. Even if they see no fruit from their sowing, still may they sow their seed by the side of all waters.

And we pray that thy blessing may rest upon all those that have gone and are going forth to the poor and ignorant to bring them up from degradation, and make them like the Master. May they have the spirit of consolation in their work; and may they see that the travail of their soul is prospering.

And we pray that thou wilt bless the nations of the earth. Bring wars, and all their cruelties and sufferings, speedily to an end. Grant that nations may learn war no more. May benevolence take the place of selfishness; and may men learn more to love and less to hate. And may that kingdom in which dwelleth righteousness come, and the whole earth see the salvation of God.

And to the Father, the Son and the Spirit, shall be praises evermore.
Amen.

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